

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USLO RIYADH
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0678

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, SY
SUBJ: LESS FANFARE PRECEEDS ALGIERS "RESISTANCE SUMMIT"

1. BAATH PARTY HEAD OF STUDENT'S UNION HAMED HASSAN TOLD
POLOFF JANUARY 31 THAT SYRIAN HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY IRAQ'S
REFUSAL TO JOINT IN THE RECONCILIATION TALKS IN ALGIERS PRIOR
TO ALGIERS SUMMIT. PEOPLE'S COUNCIL REP MUHSIN BALAL SAID
THAT SYRIAN DELEGATION FOR THE TALKS HAD BEEN READY TO TAKE
OFF FOR ALGIERS WHEN WORD WAS RECEIVED THAT IRAQIS WOULD
NOT ATTEND. DELEGATION WAS TO HAVE BEEN COMPOSED OF NAJI
JAMIL, WHO IS NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR IRAQI
AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS MOHAMMAD HAYDAR OF THE NATIONAL COUMMAND
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AND MAHMOUD HADID, REGIONAL COMMAND MEMBER. INDIAN EMBOFF
SAID HIS BAATH PARTY CONTACTS PLACED BLAME SQUARELY ON
IRAQ FOR BREAKDOWN IN WHAT SYRIANS HAD CONSIDERED PROMISING
TALKS.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:
2. PERPHAS AS A RESULT OF IRAQ'S REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN

THE ALGIERS SUMMIT AND ATTENTION MEDIA IS DEVOTING ITS RALLYING SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL REFERENDUM FEBRUARY 8, SYRIAN MEDIA IS GIVING A SMALLER BUILD-UP TO THE ALGIERS SUMMIT THAN THAT WHICH PRECEDED THE FIRST IN TRIPOLI. QKL PAPERS FEBRUARY 1 HEADLINE ASSAD'S DEPARTURE FOR THE ALGIERS SUMMIT WITH AL-BAATH FEATURING COMMENTS OF PLO'S ALGIERS REP WHO DISCUSSED THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE STEADFASTNESS FRONT, WITH SYRIA AND THE PLO AT ITS CORE. NO PREDICATIONS ARE MADE ABOUT WHAT WOULD EMERGE FROM THE CONFERENCE AND IRAQ'S DECISION TO BOYCOTT THE SUMMIT GOES VIRTUALLY UNREPORTED.

3. EDITORIALS OF JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1 COMPLAIN THAT ATTEMPTS ARE BEING MADE TO DEPICT THE FRONT AS BEING AGAINST A JUST AND LASTING PEACE. ONE EDITORIAL CHARACTERIZES THE CURRENT SITUATION AS "THE MOST DANGEROUS SITUATION THE ARAB NATION HAS CONFRONTED IN ITS MODERN HISTORY." READERS ARE WARNED THAT ATTEMPTS ARE BEING MADE "TO ENCIRCLE" THE FRONT BECAUSE OF ITS INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST SADAT. THE U.S. IS OFTEN NAMED AS BEING BEHIND THESE EFFORTS AND HINTS ARE GIVEN THAT THE CARTER-SADAT MEETING MAY BE AN ATTEMPT TO UPSTAGE THE SUMMIT.

4. WHILE NO MENTION IS DIRECTLY MADE OF IRAQ'S FAILURE TO JOIN THE TALKS, SOME EDITORIALS DO NOT BOTHER TO HIDE SYRIA'S DISAPPOINTMENT THAT OTHER ARAB STATES HAVE NOT COME ABOARD SINCE

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THE FIRST SUMMIT IN TRIPOLI. ALI SAWAN WROTE IN THAWRA, "IT HAD BEEN HOPED THAT THE INTERIM BETWEEN THE TRIPOLI AND

ALGIERS CONFERENCES COULD HAVE WITNESSED A SHIFT OF MANY ARAB FORCES FROM NEGATIVISM TO THE INITIATION OF TANGIBLE ACTION AGAINST SADAT'S DEFEATISM." HE ADMITS THAT THE FAILURE OF MORE STATES TO PARTICIPATE WILL CREATE "THE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE POLICY OF CAPITULATION." THOSE FAILING TO PARTICIPATE ARE CHARACTERIZED AS "DEFEATISTS." WALID AL-HAMAN, HOWEVER, WRITING IN AL-BAATH CLAIMS THAT "REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF THE ARAB STATES PARTICIPATING IN IT, THE SUMMIT OF STEADFASTNESS REPRESENTS THE (ARAB) NATIONS CONSCIENCE AND STRENGTH."

5. FINALLY, THE POINT IS MADE IN SEVERAL EDITORIALS THAT THE DOOR OF THE FRONT REMAINS OPEN TO ANY ARAB STATE REJECTING "CAPITULATIONIST SOLUTIONS," AND THE SUMMIT IS CALLED UPON TO GIVE "A REPLY THAT MEASURES UP THE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PLOT?" OVERALL MEDIA IS REFRAINING FROM BUILDING UP EXPECTATIONS WHICH CANNOT BE FULFILLED PRIOR TO REFERENDUM ON AL-ASSAD'S SECOND TERM.
PELLETREAU

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